arguing that there is an intense and specific form of ecomimesis. Let us consider more carefully what mimesis signifies. We have seen how ecomimesis is a rendering. Rather than a weak representation, or imitation, this is a strong, magical form, a compelling illusion rather than a simple copy. Plato's idea of mimesis is more appropriate here than Aristotle's. Aristotle considers mimesis to be simple imitation, as when an actor acts a role.[82] For Plato mimesis is a divinely inspired form of madness. This is not simply a matter of copying forms, but of being plugged in to a source of inspiration, "mainlining" reality.

The poet is a rhapsode, and mimesis is a form of rhapsody. A rhapsode is "one who stitches or strings songs together: one who recited Epic poems, a rhapsodist; sometimes . . . the bard who recited his own poem, but mostly . . . a class of persons who got their living by reciting the poems of Homer: hence the poems of Homer came to be divided into certain lengths called rhapsodies, i.e. lays or cantos, which were recited at one time."[83] Even in the case of "the bard who recited his own poem," not to mention the idea of a class of readers, rhapsody embodies a notion of reading rather than writing, of recording or transmitting rather than spontaneous production. During the later eighteenth century, "rhapsody" and "rhapsode" became associated with irrational, nonfactual language, and with the notion of "miscellany," a popular literary term at the time, indicating an almost random "threading" of topics.[84] The earlier sense of rhapsody as a threading of memorized verses extends to suggest juxtaposed poems. The expanded definition of rhapsody still gestures toward reading. Ecological rhapsody is a reading of the book of nature.

In Plato's Ion, Socrates does not exactly condemn poetry, as one might expect; rather, he places poetry outside the sphere of rational thinking. Such thinking involves a self-possessed subject, or "mastery."[85] Poetry, however, is the invasion of

divine madness. Socrates addresses the rhapsode Ion:

> It's a divine power that moves you, as a "Magnetic" stone moves iron rings . . . This stone not only pulls those rings, if they're iron, it also puts power in the rings, so that they in turn can do just what the stone does . . . so that there's sometimes a very long chain of iron pieces and rings hanging from one another ... In the same way, the Muse makes some people inspired herself, and then through those who are inspired a chain of other enthusiasts is suspended.[86]

The magnet is a suggestive image of ambient poetics. The "divine power" exerts a force we now call a magnetic field, in which things become charged with energy. Poetic power emanates from beyond the subject. Inspiration derives from the environment. Plato depicts inspiration as a transmogrification of human into beast: "Poets tell us that they gather songs at honey-flowing springs, from glades and gardens of the Muses, and that they bear songs to us as bees carry honey, flying like bees. And what they say is true. For a poet is an airy thing . . . and he is not able to make poetry until he becomes inspired and goes out of his mind and his intellect is no longer in him."[87] The poet literally "goes out of his mind," like a bee leaving the hive to gather honey from a flower. The poet is an enthusiast: literally, he or she buzzes within (Greek, en-thuein).[88] The environment ("glades and gardens of the Muses") is "out of our mind." Poetry is a medium, the contact. The poet becomes the servant of the medium, its gardener.[89] Ion becomes the puppet of fiction: "when I tell a sad story, my eyes are full of tears; and when I tell a story that's frightening or awful, my hair stands on end with fear and my heart jumps."[90] The mind lets go while the body takes over.

Whether or not it is written for recitation, ecomimesis embodies this automatic quality in its form. It is as if the narrator turns on a spigot, out of which flows a potentially endless stream of metonymic associations: "Dionysiac parousia [presence] is confirmed by the common mark of the sudden and spontaneous, the automaton, another technical term for

Dionysian epiphany."[91] Surrealist "automatic writing" develops this desire to render—not just to copy, however perfectly, but actually to transmit—something that circumvents the conscious will.[92] Andre Breton describes how the automatic writer becomes a recording device: "The expression 'all is written,' it seems to me, must be literally held to. All is written on the blank page, and writers make far too much ado about something that is like a revelation or a photographic development."[93] Some Romantic poems try to look like psychological curiosities, such as Coleridge's "Kubla Khan." Wordsworth placed lines of poetry on or in the earth, trying to turn them into found objects.[94] Just as individualism and private space were opening up, so collectivity and nonpersonal, or transpersonal, environmental space became artistically exciting.

Ecorhapsody is a mode of ecomimesis. The environment in general manifests in some specific element, as if it were magnetically charged. (I often wonder whether ecological writing is at bottom nothing other than the poetics of these fields altogether. If it were not for the gravitational field, the earth would have no atmosphere at all.) The general enters the realm of the particular. An abstraction passes into an empirical domain. "Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze."[95] Wordsworth's apostrophe to the ambient air is a fitting way to begin a poem about the formation of a poet's mind in dialectical relation with the world that surrounds him. The image suggests that significance and inspiration come from "elsewhere," even if that elsewhere is really an analogue for somewhere "in" the poet's mind. This elsewhere is beyond concept, but palpable, like the air. It exists in between somewhere so different that it is utterly unknown, and "here," the place of the subject.

Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, and Heidegger based theories of poetics on notions of attunement to and immersion in an

environment, which bring to mind the idea of rhapsody. Schopenhauer's view of lyric is that "the subjective disposition . . . imparts its own hue to the perceived surrounding, and conversely, the surroundings communicate the reflex of their color to the will."[96] For Nietzsche, the Dionysian aspect of art, embodied in the Greek chorus, is an immersion in phenomena, a blissful, intoxicated collapse of the Schopenhauerian principium individuationis (principle of individuation).[97] For Heidegger, poetics in general is a right reading of the environment—a monitoring, though he would not approve of the technological metaphor. In Heidegger's description of a van Gogh painting, the environment resonates in a pair of peasant shoes. Beyond its particular shape and texture, this environment is an inkling of Being itself, which Heidegger calls Dasein—"being there":

> As long as we only imagine a pair of shoes in general, or simply look at the empty, unused shoes as they merely stand there in the picture, we shall never discover what the equipmental being of the equipment truly is. From Van Gogh's painting we cannot even tell where these shoes stand. There is nothing surrounding this pair of peasant shoes in or to which they might belong—only an undefined space. There are not even clods of soil from the field or the field-path sticking to them, which would at least hint at their use. A pair of peasant shoes and nothing more. And yet—
>
> From the dark opening of the worn insides of the shoes the toilsome tread of the worker stares forth. In the stiffly rugged heaviness of the shoes there is the accumulated tenacity of her slow trudge through the far-spreading and ever-uniform furrows of the field swept by a raw wind. On the leather lie the dampness and richness of the soil. Under the soles slides the loneliness of the field-path as evening falls. In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth, its quiet gift of the ripening grain and its unexplained self-refusal in the fallow desolation of the wintry field. This equipment is pervaded by uncomplaining anxiety as to the certainty of bread, the wordless joy of having once more withstood want, the trembling before the impending childbed and shivering at the surrounding menace of death. This equipment belongs to the earth, and it is protected in the world of the peasant woman. From out of this protected belonging equipment itself rises to its resting-within-itself.[98]

"In the shoes vibrates the silent call of the earth": the language wants us to hear this non-sound, almost a subsonic (empirical but inaudible) sound. Beyond a certain feeling, rhapsody is

most properly the tone of the environment, registered in discrete things that, simply because they are discrete, are no longer just in the background, but have been pulled into the foreground. Rhapsody is the resonance of the background in the foreground: "In the vicinity of the work [of art] we were suddenly somewhere else than we usually tend to be."[99] The very space inside the shoes, "the dark opening of the worn insides," speaks of the outside. It all depends on what "in" means—inside? In the shoes' material? In our idea of the shoes?

Heidegger's locative vagueness has a precise function. As he develops his view of art as a "happening of truth" in the revealing of the "thingly" character of the thing, it becomes clear that this view is deeply rhapsodic. Rather than trying to be adequate to a real pair of shoes—Heidegger criticizes the idea that art is, in the medieval terminology, a kind of adaequatio—the artwork embodies the historical-cultural "world" in which it was made, and the "earth" out of which it emerges and which, in Heidegger's words, "shelters" it, "makes space for that spaciousness." In a Greek temple in a "rock-cleft valley," we glimpse the way Greek culture organized "birth and death, disaster and blessing, victory and disgrace, endurance and decline"; and "The luster and gleam of the stone, though itself apparently glowing only by the grace of the sun, yet first brings to light the light of the day, the breadth of the sky, the darkness of the night."[100] Unlike the transcendental,

Neoplatonic realm, to which representation can only be adequate, Heidegger posits a beyond that is also right here. No wonder ecopoetics, which wants to convey both here and a sense of beyond, often looks to Heidegger. But as we saw in the analysis of the Aeolian, what is obscure (beyond) opens up the possibility of a threatening void, an inert or dark spot that fascinates ecopoetics and which ecopoetics wants to paint over.

Ecorhapsody mobilizes class, as we shall see when we examine ambience as a function of automation in the following chapter. For Heidegger "man is the shepherd of Being"—he might as well have said that man is the rhapsode of being, a romanticized worker whose job is to hold it in mind.[101] Aristotle's pragmatic definition of mimesis links humans to animals: man is the "most imitative of creatures."[102] Ecorhapsody can also mobilize species. Despite his comparison of poets to bees, Plato's view of rhapsody removes humans from the animal realm. Likewise, Heidegger said explicitly that animals lacked precisely a sense of their environment as a surrounding "world."[103] More recently, David Abram has tried to link environmental poetics to an attunement to the animal aspects of human being.[104] There is a zero-sum game going on here, however one thinks of animals. Either one is more conscious and less attuned to the world, or more sensitive to the world and less conscious.

What would a rhapsodic tuning-in look like? The environment produces a certain tone inside a railway carriage in Edward Thomas's "Adlestrop":

Yes. I remember Adlestrop— The name, because one afternoon Of heat the express-train drew up there Unwontedly. It was late June.

The steam hissed. Someone cleared his throat. No one left and no one came On the bare platform. What I saw Was Adlestrop—only the name

And willows, and willow-herb, and grass, And meadowsweet, and haycocks dry, No whit less still and lonely fair Than the high cloudlets in the sky.

And for that minute a blackbird sang Close by, and round him, mistier,

Farther and farther, all the birds Of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire.[105]

The sheer name of a train station gives rise to a whole sequence of surrounding impressions. The first seem

insignificant. The hissing steam and the clearing throat are timbral. They are functions of the physi-cality of the train and its passengers. Before we get a positive description of the surrounding world, there is an uncanny sense of something lurking just beyond our ken. It is a present absence made vivid by the "don't think of a pink elephant" quality of "No one left and no one came / On the bare platform" (6-7), a good example of the "negative quantity" described earlier as a feature of ambient tone.

We look back at the beginning of the poem—one of the features of silent reading is that we can scan backward—and find it changed. The poem was already an answer to a question hanging in the air: "Yes. I remember Adlestrop" (1). Whether or not the narrator posed the question, the "Yes" medially acknowledges the communication dimension. Moreover, before the paratactic rhapsody beginning with "And" (9) there is a blank space, unmarked with words. It serves as the re-mark that opens the inside of the carriage to the outside world. It distinguishes the inside from the outside and their attendant associations (industry/nature, stillness/movement, intimate/panoramic). A linking and a de-linking, a spacing, opens up before we know it. We can only know it after the fact. "Adlestrop" always already existed within a larger textual field. The poem itself has an "elsewhere" whence it arises, in the definite yet nonconceptual sense outlined earlier. In the same way, the station name, "Adlestrop," always existed within a wider environment. Ian Hamilton Finlay's sculpture Starlit Waters (1967) consists of the carved wooden phrase "Starlit Waters" enveloped by a fishing net, as if the title were the name of a boat; a name that also refers to the environment around it. So while the poem, moving forward, widens out to include this environment, if we look backward, we see that there already was one. This sensation creeps up on us uncannily. It is as if we had never left. The medium that contains the poem, for which Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire are in some ways just analogues, tugs at us.

That "and" in the third verse amplifies the reader's awareness out of the carriage to include a widening circle of things, "farther and farther." "It was late June" (4): the innocent-seeming "It was" contains its own haunting rhapsodic tone. Emmanuel Levinas has examined the effect of the "there is" (French il y a; German Es gibt). What is the "it" when we say "it is raining"? The "it" is Being for Heidegger, "a presence of absence," since it cannot exist on its own.[106] For Levinas the it is the horrifying—that is, literally flesh-creeping—quality of sheer existence. This is the horror of what Levinas characterizes as experience in a Cartesian world, despite himself, if we are to believe his citation of Pascal, who wrote of Cartesian space that its silence filled him with dread.[107]

There is "transcends inwardness as well as exteriority," subject and object. Levinas writes:

> When the forms of things are dissolved in the night, the darkness of the night, which is neither an object nor the quality of an object, invades like a presence. In the night, where we are riven to it, we are not dealing with anything. But this nothing is not that of pure nothingness. There is no longer this or that; there is not "something." But this universal absence is in its turn a presence, an absolutely unavoidable presence. It is not the dialectical counterpart of absence, and we do not grasp it through a thought. It is immediately there. There is no discourse. Nothing responds to us, but this silence; the voice of this silence is understood and frightens like the silence of those infinite spaces Pascal speaks of. There is, in general, without it mattering what there is, without our being able to fix a substantive to this term. There is is an impersonal form, like in it rains, or it is warm. Its anonymity is essential. The mind does not find itself faced with an apprehended exterior. The exterior—if one insists on this term—remains uncor-related with an interior. It is no longer given. It is no longer a world. What we call the I is itself submerged by the night, invaded, depersonalized, stifled by it. The disappearance of all things and of the I leaves what cannot disappear, the sheer fact of being in which one participates, whether one wants to or not, without having taken the initiative, anonymously. Being remains, like a field of forces, like a heavy atmosphere belonging to no one, universal, returning in the midst of the negation which put it aside, and in all the powers to which that negation may be multiplied.

It is or there is makes us aware of tone, both inside and outside our bodies. There is more or less tension in the environment: "The rustling of the there is . . . is horror."[108] Levinas's

onomatopoeia is disembodied. The there is is an automated process.

The environment just happens around us, without our intention. Or it is the objectified, perhaps unintended consequence of an intention— intention's echo. Levertov figures nature as a series of reading-writing processes continuing in some other key, around and beyond the act of reading the written text. The earth (in Heidegger's sense) continues behind our backs, "over there." Levertov makes a poem about that, turning inside out the normative subject of lyric which, as writers from

Schopenhauer to Allen Grossman have observed,, is the ego (Grossman's suggestive phrase is "the genre of the other mind"[109] Instead of getting to know the narrator's sense of self, of "I," the narrator forces us to attune to it. Instead of here is, the poem says there is.

Ecorhapsody operates through parataxis and metonymy. The general shines in the particular after a lot of rubbing, each phrase trying to coax a new sparkle. Lists have a tempo or phase. They can also have varied moments of intensity or tone. Shifts in phase and tone evoke a force from "elsewhere" within the text itself. Levertov's poem has intense tone. Three stanzas of similar length accumulate three strong images. The final image has a slower phase than the others, since it is repeated: "the sea is turning its dark pages, / turning / its dark pages" (8-10). Our eyes must "turn" from one line to the next to follow the syntax, producing a rhythmical slowing-down that echoes the way the image coagulates and hangs at the bottom of the poem.

Ecorhapsodic lists are suffused with enjoyment, never directly available, off to the side, just around the corner, in the next item on the list. In ecorhapsodic mimesis, we can always

admire but never touch. One way to radicalize ecorhapsody is to shatter the aesthetic distance that enables the sliding of desire. Coleridge opts radically for "hot" rather than "cool" (aesthetic) contemplation in The Ancient Mariner. When the Mariner "loses himself" rhapsodically in the water snakes (4.272-287), the proximity of the disgusting object punctures the normative aesthetic distance associated with "good taste," the product of eighteenth-century aesthetic development.[110] Likewise, the drinking and eating of Orphic substances in "Kubla Khan" turns the poet into the target of a ritualized disgust ("Weave a circle round him thrice, / And close your eyes with holy dread," (51-52)).[111] Like Keats, Coleridge approaches hyperbolic enjoyment, undermining the distance and mastery of the anthropocentric human subject. There are poetic traditions within Romanticism that run counter to the expectations of ecomimesis.

Ecodidacticism is an often deliberately oblique quality by which ecomimesis makes us exclaim, "Oh! Nature!" There are two levels of didacticism. Ecomimesis points us in the direction of nature, which is meant to teach us something. In "Adlestrop," the expansion of awareness outside the railway carriage eventually makes us aware of the counties of Oxfordshire and Gloucestershire. No longer are we in a purely abstract space of hissing and throat clearing, but we are in a highly significant place charged with national identity. There may be explicit instructions about how to look for natural things. For instance, we could be advised on how to set up our equipment—a tent, some binoculars—so as to see birds or flowers more vividly. But ecomimesis may contain another command, one that does not involve instruments but evokes nature as noninstrumental or anti-technological. This is the order to stop reading and "go out into" nature. The injunction is to "Look up!" from one's book, as Wordsworth's "The Tables Turned" puts it. To read an injunction to stop reading is paradoxical. A 1970s children's television program in the United Kingdom was called Why Don't You Just Turn off Your Television Set and Go and Do

Something More Interesting Instead? Of course, it was always more interesting to watch other people doing it on the TV (see "Reality Writing" in Chapter 2). And there is always some instrumentality—this noninstrumental nature is for something, if only, in a circular fashion, to teach us the value of the noninstrumental. Ecodidacticism thus participates in the Kantian aesthetic of purposiveness without a purpose.

There is a very intense moment of ecodidacticism in Thoreau's The Maine Woods. The high ecomimetic tone, a veritable forest of phrases that stretches over the best part of the first hundred pages in the Penguin edition, finally gives way to Thoreau's realization, as he narrates the descent of Mount Katahdin, that this is "primeval, untamed, and forever untamable Nature."[112] Thoreau mythologizes the mountain as a powerfully nonhuman realm:

> It is difficult to conceive of a region uninhabited by man. We habitually presume his presence and influence everywhere. And yet we have not seen pure Nature, unless we have seen her thus vast and drear and inhuman, though in the midst of cities. Nature was here something savage and awful, though beautiful. I looked with awe at the ground I trod on, to see what the Powers had made there, the form and fashion and material of their work. This was that earth of which we have heard, made out of Chaos and Old Night. Here was no man's garden, but the unhandseled globe. It was not lawn, nor pasture, nor mead, nor woodland, nor lea, or arable, nor waste land. It was the fresh and natural surface of the planet Earth, as it was made forever and ever,—to be the dwelling of man, we say,—so Nature made it, and man may use it if he can. Man was not to be associated with it. It was Matter, vast, terrific,—not his Mother Earth that we have heard of, not for him to tread on, or be buried in,—no, it were being too familiar even to let his bones lie there,—the home, this, of Necessity and Fate.[113]

The Greek Titans (Chaos, Night) bestow upon this wilderness a sense of something primitive, something that many previous societies superseded. "Unhandseled" is the key word. It is derived from an Old English noun for money or a gift, as an offering that inaugurates something (earnest money); a luckpenny, or token of good luck; a first installment; or an offering inaugurating the new year.[114] Thoreau describes the

wilderness as never having entered into any economic transaction. Even a precapitalist term from old-fashioned rituals is inappropriate. The more modern (Enlightenment) gods of "Nature . . . Matter . . . Necessity and Fate" lose something in this linguistic transaction. They lose all trace of rationality.

Didacticism blends with rhapsody, as Thoreau's rhetoric injects the feel of nonhuman nature into our very minds:

> What is it to be admitted to a museum, to see a myriad of particular things, compared with being shown some star's surface, some hard matter in its home! I stand in awe of my body, this matter to which I am bound has become so strange to me. I fear not spirits, ghosts, of which I am one,—that my body might,—but I fear bodies, I tremble to meet them. What is this titan that has possession of me? Talk of mysteries! Think of our life in nature,—daily to be shown matter, to come into contact with it,—rocks, trees, wind on our cheeks! the solid earth! the actual world! the common sense! Contact! Contact! Who are we? Where are we?[115]

The italics at the end perform the role of the re-mark. They announce a heightened tone, inviting the reader to imagine his or her vocal muscles tightening. They put our body into the text, which had been gliding along of its own accord for almost a hundred pages. This far into The Maine Woods, we are embedded in the "contact" of a text, and here we are made to wonder at how far in we have gone. Textual pressure renders an environmental one. Despite the wealth of texts on the Maine Woods, the rhetoric evokes an utterly pristine zone.[116] Even when the narrator is apparently screaming in our face ("Contact! Contact!"), the message hovers off to one side. It appears to inhabit an entirely different dimension, like the skull in Hans Holbein's painting The Ambassadors. Nature loses its nature when we look at it head on. We can only glimpse it anamorphically—as a distortion, as a shapeless thing, or as the way in which other things lose their shape. This "shapeless thing" is the very form of ecological writing.

Ecomimesis as Fantasy: Are You Experienced?

Why is ambient rhetoric, with its basic feature of the re-mark, vital to ecomimesis? Ecological writing wants to undo habitual distinctions between nature and ourselves. It is supposed not just to describe, but also to provide a working model for a dissolving of the difference between subject and object, a dualism seen as the fundamental philosophical reason for human beings' destruction of the environment. If we could not merely figure out but actually experience the fact that we were embedded in our world, then we would be less likely to destroy it. The subject-object dualism depends upon a distinction between inside and outside. The subject is "this," "over here," inside; the object is "that," "over there," outside. Various metaphysical systems support this distinction, and not just in the West. The Hindu idea of tat tvam asi for instance ("thou art that"), is posited as the pinnacle of self-realization. Indeed, it has been a function of the orientalism of ecological criticism that it has usually considered the West to be hopelessly mired in Cartesian dualism, while other, more exotic or primitive cultures benefit from a more embedded view.[117] Since our thinking appears compromised beyond repair, the new ecological view derives from an aesthetic experience of the natural world.[118]

Val Plumwood's Environmental Culture, a philosophical text, contains ecomimesis. None is more sustained than a passage from the chapter "Towards a Materialist Spirituality of Place." The chapter concludes Plumwood's investigation of how notions of reason should be refashioned to suit a moment of ecological crisis. Plumwood tries to find an "alternative paradigm" to Lockean theories of land ownership in a sense of communication: "making ownership out in the essentially narrative terms of naming and interpreting in the land, in telling its story in ways that show a deep and loving acquaintance with it and a history of dialogical interaction."[119] The effect of the passage is cumulative:

A world perceived in communicative and narrative terms is certainly far richer and

more exciting than the self-enclosed world of meaningless and silent objects exclusionary, monological and commodity thinking creates, reflecting back to us only the echo of our own desires. The communica-tivity and intentionality of more-than-human others is often the key to the power of place. As dusk gathers beyond my desk and the light glows green, the forest around me comes alive with a sublime and delicate sound like the chiming of countless little silver bells. The sound is almost the only sign to human senses of the innumerable tiny rainforest tree crickets who rub their wings and legs together to make it. It evokes the enchantment of late summer in the cool, misty mountain forest of my Australian home more richly and sensually than any human description, any photograph, map or calendar. As the year turns, this dusk song gives way to others, in regular succession, for the twilight is a sensory and communicative space of much significance for forest dwellers. The erotic tinkling of the crickets holds the space until the first cool weather. That is the time for the squeals of the Little Red Flying Foxes feeding on nectar-filled white Pinkwood flowers. Then, in the chilly violet twilights of late autumn, the silence may be broke by a Lyrebird calling late from nest or perch. Or, if you are lucky, you may hear a distant Powerful Owl hoot and cry for love. In the frosty stillness of moon-silver nights in May or June, you should listen for the Sooty Owl's shuddering, ghostly, scream, and for the questing bass of a mal Barking Owl from June to August, while the courting Mountain Thrushes still play their early evening flutes. August brings forth the first Boobrook Owl duets—his baritone to her soprano— that signal spring, foreshadowing their cheerful but impassioned mating operettas of September and October. November to January is the best time for the great frog choruses, although these in turn have their negotiated spaces and species successions throughout the year. But from midsummer onwards the lusty tree frogs retire and dewfall brings out the whole droning orchestras of mole crickets, each drone, it seems, equipped with an ear-splitting vibrator designed to guide in a flying evening mate. When they too begin to retire in February, the cycle starts once more as the gentle love-songs of the dew-crickets fill the twilight autumn air again until the first cold spell.[120]

The idea of dialogue, taken from Mikhail Bakhtin and Jiirgen Habermas in equal measure, is important to Plumwood. But the form this particular passage takes, even as it demonstrates a dialogue with other sentient beings, is not itself a dialogue. This is not to argue against Plumwood's thesis, or to catch it in the act of betraying itself; for example, by finding that this is actually an example of individualist monologue. This passage is not a monologue. It is more like a jungle of writing, twisting, and writhing to such an extent that it almost appears autonomous from the text that surrounds it. It requires more and more of itself to justify itself. There is no logical conclusion. There are notes of instrumental didacticism: "you should listen . . . November to January is the best time for. . . ."

But there is an overwhelming, seductively noninstrumental quality to the whole thing. What is it doing almost at the end of Plumwood's book? It is providing a fantasy, an aesthetic playground in which the ideas in the book appear incarnated, a literary gravitational field generated by the sheer quantity of vivid description (elcphrasis). Plumwood's ecomimesis is ambient in relation to the main argument. It hovers to one side of it, not directly supporting it but making it aesthetically appealing.

We might think that Plumwood's rhetoric is just a special feature of a religious form of ecological discourse. We might think that it need not concern us very much, if we are ready to take it with a pinch of salt. But this language demands a genuine response. Moreover, it is strikingly the same when writing tries to invoke a sheer sense of environment as if for its own sake. Experimental art likewise models Utopian spaces, rather than simply describing something. Take a look at the sophisticated evocation of ambient sound, at the very beginning of David Toop's Ocean of Sound:

Sitting quietly in never-never land, I am listening to summer fleas jump off my small female cat on to the polished wood floor. Outside, starlings are squabbling in the fig tree and from behind me I can hear swifts wheeling over rooftops. An ambulance siren, full panic mode, passes from behind the left centre of my head to starboard front. Next door, the neighbours are screaming—". . . fuck you ... I didn't . . . get out that door . . ."—but I tune that out. The ambient hum of night air and low frequency motor vehicle drone merges with insect hum called back from the 1970s, a country garden somewhere, high summer in the afternoon. The snow has settled. I can smell woodsmoke. Looking for fires I open the front door, peer into the shining dark and hear stillness. Not country stillness but urban shutdown. So tranquil.

Truthfully, I am lying in intensive care. Wired, plugged and electronically connected, I have glided from coma into a sonic simulation of past, and passed, life. As befits an altered state, the memories have been superimposed, stripped of context, conflated from seasons, times, eras, moments, even fictions, into a concentrated essence of my existence in the sound-world.

These sounds reconnect me to a world from which I had disengaged. Sound places us in the real universe. Looking ahead, I can see a plane enlivened by visually represented objects. I can touch within a limited radius. I can smell a body, a glass

of beer, burning dust. But sound comes from everywhere, unbidden. My brain seeks it out, sorts it, makes me feel the immensity of the universe even when I have no wish to look or absorb.[121]

The passage continues for another page. Toop does not argue, but renders, like Plumwood. He is both rhapsodic and didactic —"Sound places us in the real universe." The imagery is more self-reflexive than Plumwood's. The sounds are juxtaposed memories rather than an actually existing "soundscape." This is a construct, says the passage. The narrator wants us to know that this is a simulation. But despite this, perhaps even because of it, the passage is compelling. It strives to authenticate the "I" by situating it: "Sitting quietly ... I am listening," albeit in "never-never land." Whether the space being evoked is supposed to be real or taken as unreal, the same rhetorical strategies apply: authentication, rendering, the Aeolian, and other ambient effects such as suspension and stasis.

If, as demonstrated, the dissolution of inside and outside is strictly impossible—though ecomimesis puts a lot of effort into simulating it— then ecomimesis is a form of ideological fantasy. When ambient rhetoric tries to blur inside and outside, or abolish them, or superimpose them, it generates an inconsistent "thing." Lyotard's "nuance" exists somewhere "in between" the normative colors, or in between the normative notes of a musical scale. This "in between" is better described as ambience, with "nuance" as an aspect of tone. Students of literature should be beginning to recognize what is going on here. It is commonly called the aesthetic. But Lyotard asserts that nuance is beyond normal aesthetic categories and hence, he hopes, the problems associated with the aesthetic: notably, that it does not really collapse the subject-object dualism, either by reconciling subject to object, or by undoing the distinction altogether. Ambience, or nuance, are "new and improved" versions of the aesthetic. In bursting the bubble of the aesthetic, we find ourselves in a new, potentially even more compelling, bubble.

Nevertheless, the fantastic inconsistency of ambience makes it possible to do critique. Ambience is what Jacques Lacan would have called a sinthome. The sinthome is the materially embodied, meaningless, and inconsistent kernel of "idiotic enjoyment" that sustains an otherwise discursive ideological field.[122] The sinthome of homophobia, for instance, might be an image of the "queer," or certain kinds of sex act. Ideology resides in the distance we assume toward this fantasy object. By collapsing the distance we undermine the potency of the ideological field. Within every field is a symptom, and every symptom can be made to vomit forth a sinthome. By assuming with pride the word queer, the gay movement disabled the ideological field that sustains homophobia. This paradoxical act of identification with the fantasy object of ideology could be mirrored in critical analysis, by the relentless close reading of texts, not in order to achieve some tasteful distance toward them, but precisely in order to "mess around" with them, or as my students sometimes say in horror, "dissect."

A word about "objects." I have modified the term sinthome. What Lacan applies to an objectal substance could apply to surrounding space. This involves an inversion. Imagine the sinthome not as figure but as ground: a potent, non-neutral ground, a giant stain. This would square well with the vaginal connotations of the sinthome, in patriarchy a wound that is also a space.[123] When I refer to ambience as a fantasy thing, the terminology is not quite exact—fantasy space is more like it.

If it is to have teeth, ecocritique must be self-critical. Ecocritique is a twofold process, consisting both in exuberant friendliness and disarming skepticism. The approach is not to be confused with nihilism. We are treading a path between saying that something called nature exists, and saying that nothing exists at all. We are not claiming that some entity lies between these views. We are dealing with the raw materials of ideology, the stuff that generates seductive images of "nature."

That is why it is important to go as "far in" to the notion of nature in ecomimesis as possible. In the name of ecology itself, we should pull out all the plugs. This is radically different from a "new historicist" approach, in which our own analysis, rightly wary of the aesthetic dimension, ironically recreates the very aesthetic distance it is criticizing, by holding the artwork at a disdainful distance. At its best, historicism claims that there is no single solid subject of history. But it also risks casting a negative aura around the aesthetic object, one of phobic distance. It re-creates history in the image of a self-contained, richly ambivalent poem as read by one of the New Critics like Cleanth Brooks.

Do we find any inconsistencies in nature writing? There is a profound inconsistency between ambience, the way ecomimesis operates, and ecomimesis itself. The poetics of the echo, for example, interferes with the fantasy that ecomimesis is immediate. This immediacy must be an illusion that the narrator manages to pull off, with varying degrees of success. And even if successful, the illusion is not an accurate rendering of the environment. We can only perceive things after they have arisen, never before and never at exactly the same time. In this sense, all experience is only passing memory. Ambient poetics, amplifying this quality, is imbued with the uncanny, but there is a disjunction with ecomimesis at this point. Ecomimesis resists the uncanny, in its effort to present an original, pristine nature not "infected" with the consciousness, the mentality, or the desire of the perceiver, unless it is deemed to be "natural." Ecomimesis wants to deliver nature in the raw, but it always arrives with a slight smell of burning.

Echoes are inescapable features of ambience. Some nature writers think that they are receiving a direct transmission from nature, when in fact they are watching a mirror of the mind. There is a choice between honesty and hypocrisy. We can admit that all we can sense of nature is an echo of our "sounding out" of it. We posit nature retroactively. Narcissus is

only aware of his beloved Echo through the repetition of his words. This was formalized in Renaissance verse when "Echo" repeats the last syllables of a verse. This is a basic mimetic function of some animals: the echolocation of bats "sounds out" the dimensions of a place, a phenomenon exploited by Alvin Lucier in Vespers, in which musicians use electronic devices that emit pulses of sound for the same purpose. For Narcissus to love Echo properly, he must love her as the trace of his voice reflected in the sheer extension of matter: the vibrational qualities of air, the reflective properties of water. To remain true to Echo he must remain "faithful" to the fact that she only exists as a "faithful" reproduction of his voice. Narcissism appears on both sides of the equation.[124] Narcissism is on the side of self-absorption disguised as immersion in, or contact with, another being (called Nature). And narcissism is on the side of the subject who cynically knows "very well" that he or she is in an echo chamber.

The exuberant immediacy of ecorhapsody contradicts the melancholic delay of the ambient effects out of which it is made. Ecorhapsody suggests that we can have the real deal, nature as it is, even while it consists of a list of elements, which only gestures toward the real. Ecodidacticism infers that nature and self are connected, and in so doing short-circuits the paradoxes of ambient rhetoric. Consider the trope of chiasmus: I am you and what I see is me; I am he as you are he as you are me and we are all together.[125] Merleau-Ponty describes experience as a "chiasm," an intertwining of what is sensed with the one who is sensing.[126] Such ideas are very suggestive for ecological poetics, since they provide a way of determining that the self and its world are intertwined. Chiasmus does not solve anything, because in order to work, both terms must be preserved even as they are cancelled at another level. Think of an optical illusion that confuses background and foreground, such as the faces/candlestick, or a work by M. C. Escher, playing with simplistic cubes without proper foreshortening, such that the front and back faces have

the same size.[127] It becomes impossible to say which face is at the front. The trick operates on two levels. On the first level, we perceive a breakdown of our normal distinction between background and foreground, but on the second, this distinction is preserved. In order for the first level to be effective, the second level must also be effective. What is given with one gesture is paradoxically taken away with another. Term x dissolves into term y, but retains the form of term x. Otherwise we would not be able to recognize that it had dissolved! All we would be left with would be term y. So when nature writing collapses self and nature, it prizes them apart on another level.

What if, however, the chiasmus did not want us to solve it, to hold both its terms properly together in our mind? What if the philosophical musing that chiasmus lets loose concealed a meaningless, "sprouting" enjoyment? This is where the sinthome, the kernel of idiotic enjoyment, operates. One would expect a poetics of rendering to be interested in employing the sinthome. A simple way of recognizing the sinthome is to wonder what all this nature writing is for. There is just so much of it; a potentially infinite supply. Nature writing tries to evoke this sense of sheer stuff. The form of Chinese painting called "mountains and rivers without end" was borrowed for Gary Snyder's huge poem sequence of the same name.[128] At most points in the giant scroll on which the mountains and rivers are painted, except at the beginning and at the end, there is the sense that the scroll could go on forever. There is just a vast proliferation of brushstrokes. In the same way, nature writing in general is sinthomic, a sprawl of sheer text. By analogy, "nature" is a gigantic swathe of sheer life, or stuff. This stuff is always eluding conceptually, not because it transcends the material realm, but because it is relentlessly material. Our conceptual mind keeps slipping off its surface. Snyder's poem tries to capture, to render, this quality as an experience of Buddhist shunyata or emptiness, though the term evokes the idea of nothingness rather than the "something-ness" I am aiming at here.

Western explorations of Buddhism aside, we are not far from the notion of a life-substance that emerged in Lebensphilosophie in Schelling and others, from which existential and psychoanalytic ideas, not to mention literary ones, of life are derived. Nature, after all, according to modern (post-Romantic) thinking, is what sprouts; it is the state of stimulation, of metabolism between the inside and the outside. It is the state of swelling and opening to the outside—or orgasm, as Lamarck put it.[129] Paul Ricoeur's idea of metaphor also leaps to mind. Ricoeur states, "Lively expression is that which expresses existence as alive. "[13]° Nature writing embodies this orgasmic view of life (French, jouissance) in the aesthetic form of endless textuality. Thoreau's The Maine Woods does not even try to tell us something, but appears merely to be a journal, something artless that falls out of normal conventions of literary narrative. Didacticism becomes an orgasmic peak rather than a sober reflection. But nature writing involves us in a basic paradox. The more nature we have, and therefore the more "lively expression," the more writing we have. The paradox is present in the very phrase "nature writing." Is nature to be thought of as writing? Or is writing a natural process, in the sense that Byron meant when he referred to the "lava" of imagination?[131] Nature writing is a dense chiasmus.

For Ricoeur, "All mimesis, even creative—nay, especially creative— mimesis, takes place within the horizons of a being-in-the-world which it makes present."[132] This sounds like a positive theory of ecomimesis, which wants to fit nature like skin fits a hand—it is the hand. Adorno's remarks on the way some art "steps out" into nature, collapsing the barrier between art and non-art, are appropriate here:

> Authentic artworks, which hold fast to the idea of reconciliation with nature by making themselves completely a second nature, have consistently felt the urge, as if in need of a breath of fresh air, to step outside of themselves. Since identity is not to be their last word, they have sought consolation in first nature . . . The extent to

which this taking a breath depends on what is mediated, on the world of conventions, is unmistakable. Over long periods the feeling of natural beauty intensified with the suffering of the subject thrown back on himself in a mangled and administered world; the experience bears the mark of Weltschmerz. Even Kant had misgivings about the art made by human beings and conventionally opposed to nature . . . The gesture of stepping out into the open is shared . . . with the artworks of their time. Kant lodged the sublime—and probably along with it all beauty that rises above the mere play of form—in nature.[133]

Adorno asserts that sometimes art needs to "take a breath," to renounce the hard work of dominating nature in the name of art. Instead of shaping natural materials into sculpture, perhaps sculpture should dissolve back into nature, as in the work of Andy Goldsworthy. Nature writing is another way of saying artless art. The sinthome is necessarily inconsistent. There is no genuine material embodiment of an ideological system. The presence of chiasmus should alert to an intense, sinthomic level, which does not make sense but just is, beyond the pleasant mirror effect of chiasmus itself.

Presence and absence are intertwined in difference. Ecomimetic tone—the bodily sensation of thereness—is compromised by the inescapable dimension of time. Ecological writing may want to drag us into the here and now, in a mystical or primitivist or exoticist gesture that seeks to sweep away bad Western cunning. The past is just an illusion. The future is yet to come. Dig the present! But when we get there, we discover that the here and now does not exist either. The here and now has come to be associated with a certain meditative calm and quiet. Yet quiet—even more so silence—is always elsewhere. It is someone else's, somewhere else (Cage: "all of the sound we don't intend").[134] Quietness is a common effect of ambient music, which strives to be below the threshold of regular listening. Quietness strives toward the pregnant pause: syncope. Syncope is thus always the effect of tone—there is always some information (in the cybernetic sense), and in order to differentiate it there must be some roughness, some noise. Quiet is the idea of tone we almost

can't perceive, tone that is constantly vanishing. It is not necessarily relaxed or peaceful. The syncope

De Quincey analyzes—the silence in Macbeth after the murder of King Duncan—is unbearably tense. The narrative cliche "It's quiet—too quiet" speaks the truth that as soon as we perceive it, quiet becomes saturated with tone and therefore intense. Quiet itself is stimulating.

Like death, quiescence is always further to the side of the margin of the paper than where we rest our reading gaze. But we can still glimpse it out of the corners of our eyes. Freud tries to give an ambience to death, an experiential quality, as if we could experience it on this side. Life yearns toward, in James Strachey's poetic translation, "the quiescence of the inorganic world."[135] This haunting phrase is more than what Freud might be suggesting, however. "Quiescence" implies something still living, where "inertia" would have brought it to a dead stop. We want to experience ourselves as objects. In other words, consciousness tries to feel what it is like to be a purely extended thing (res externa, in Cartesian terms).

Nirvana has a Utopian edge and is relevant in this life, as Adorno recognized. One can imagine it as an experience rather than as the dissolution of experience:

> A mankind which no longer knows want will begin to have an inkling of the delusory, futile nature of all the arrangements hitherto made in order to escape want, which used wealth to reproduce want on a larger scale. Enjoyment itself would be affected, just as its present framework is inseparable from operating, planning, having one's way, subjugating. Rien faire comme une bete, lying on water and looking peacefully at the sky, "being, nothing else, without any further definition and fulfilment," might take the place of process, act, satisfaction, and so truly keep the promise of dialectical logic that it would culminate in its origin. None of the abstract concepts comes closer to fulfilled **Utopia** than that of eternal peace.[136]

Blankness and silence thus convey, in extremis, either a state in which nothing must be done, or one in which nothing needs

to be done. Ecomimesis strains to see outside itself, in a dialectic of life and death: a rhythm that alternates between incorporating the environment and becoming tenser, versus relaxing into an inorganic state (becoming the environment). Peeping round the corner at a state where there are no humans, no readers—trying to see our own death—is a common ecological fantasy, as Mary Shelley demonstrated very early in her science-fiction work, The Last Man, in which the reader gets to contemplate a world without humans.[137] When we try to see our own death, the "we" who are seeing remain alive.

Wordsworth is the Romantic master of tone, and the ironic ways in which consciousness floats around it, recalls it, alters it. Through simple repetition, he suggests the tension of a sigh or a sob, a physical tightening or relaxing, within the act of reading the poem. Tone appears to float above or behind the sheer linguistic surface.[138] The notion of repetition brings up another feature of ambient poetics. Retroactivity compels us to look back, or listen back, through time to posit something new, to reframe or to alter what we have been perceiving. We can't be sure that we have been in a suspension until we have left it; retroactively, we know that the narrative has been circling around on itself. Likewise, the environment becomes audible as an echo, as afterimage.[139]

Even though Hegel attributes pure repetition to cultures existing outside his concept of history (such as Africa), repetition persists within the very teleological structures of high Romanticism. Here I concur with James Snead, who identified countercurrents of European philosophy and culture that celebrated the idea of repetition.[140] Repetition is the subject of Wordsworth's "There was a Boy," a "lyrical ballad" about a boy who hoots to owls, repeating their sounds across a lake.

There was a Boy, ye knew him well, ye Cliffs And Islands of Winander! many a time,
At evening, when the stars had just begun To move along the edges of the hills,

Rising or setting, would he stand alone, Beneath the trees, or by the glimmering lake, And there, with fingers interwoven, both hands Press'd closely palm to palm and co his mouth Uplifted, he, as through an instrument, Blew mimic hootings to the silent owls That they might answer him. And they would shout Across the wat'ry vale and shout again Responsive to his call, with quivering peals, And long halloos, and screams, and echoes loud Redoubled and redoubled, a wild scene Of mirth and jocund din. And, when it chanced That pauses of deep silence mock'd his skill, Then, sometimes, in that silence, while he hung Listening, a gentle shock of mild surprize Has carried far into his heart the voice Of mountain torrents, or the visible scene Would enter unawares into his mind With all its solemn imagery, its rocks,

Its woods, and that uncertain heaven, receiv'd Into the bosom of the steady lake.

Fair are the woods, and beauteous is the spot, The vale where he was born: the Church-yard hangs Upon a slope above the village school, And there along that bank when I have pass'd At evening, I believe, that near his grave A full half-hour together I have stood, Mute—for he died when he was ten years old.[141]

De Quincey was immensely fond of the suspension or parenthesis in the middle, when we read that the owls sometimes do not respond to the boy's "mimic hootings" (10), and that in the silence he becomes aware of his environment. Out for a walk one evening with William Wordsworth, De Quincey's mind is opened to an awareness of ambience: "No sound came up through the winding valleys that stretched to the north, and the few cottage lights, gleaming at wide distances from recesses amidst the rocky hills, had long been extinct."[142] The apophasis of "no sound" makes us hear the absence of sound—ambient poetics resounds with this logic, the same as that which applies in "don't think of a pink elephant!"

De Quincey continues: "Once, when he was slowly rising from his effort, his eye caught a bright star that was glittering between the brow of Seat Sandal and of the mighty Helvellyn." Wordsworth declares " 'if, under any circumstances, the attention is energetically braced up to an act of steady observation, or of steady expectation, then, if this intense condition of vigilance should suddenly relax, at that moment any beautiful, any impressive visual object, or collection of

objects, falling upon the eye, is carried to the heart with a power not known under other circumstances.' " This unexpected consequence of a meditative state should be familiar to anyone who has practiced meditation. Wordsworth explains:

> Just now, my ear was placed upon the stretch, in order to catch any sound of wheels that might come down upon the lake of Wythburn from the Keswick road; at the very instant when I raised my head from the ground, in final abandonment of hope for this night, at the very instant when the organs of attention were all at once relaxing from their tension, the bright star hanging in the air above those outlines of massy blackness fell suddenly upon my eye, and penetrated my capacity of apprehension with a pathos and a sense of the infinite, that would not have arrested me under other circumstances.[143]

Wordsworth outlines a minimalist sensory attunement, like meditation, one of surprising surprise, we might say—of a surprise that remains surprise because it does not participate in what Wordsworth himself called the "gross and violent stimulants" of the poetics of sensibility.[144]

We find out that we have been standing beside the boy's grave all the time we were reading of the boy's exploits in the woods, returning the echoes of the owls. Looking back from the end of the poem we posit the boy's death and our identification with him, in a tranquil, sweet quietness. The whole poem becomes an "echo" of the boy. We can only become aware that we were in a space of identification after the fact. This awareness is always uncanny—familiar yet strange, and even more so, familiarly strange, based on minimal clues such as the repetition of "hung" (18) and "hangs" (27), the position of both of which at the ends of lines makes us hang suspended in mid-page. The ultimate uncanny experience is recognizing the strange as a familiar feature of the familiar. Freud explained that the uncanny was associated with the compulsion to repeat. In ambient poetics, the uncanny works such that the space-time of the text turns out to have changed, almost imperceptibly. We become attuned to this quality before the text is read, before it

begins. So the sense is that the change will have occurred. This quality of future anteriority is built into the work—an uncannily proleptic backward glance. We get the uncanny sense that at some time in the unfolding of the text, we will look back and all will have changed. Like a loud sound heard from far away, the retroactivity effect in "There was a Boy" makes sure that the poem is not just a plateau of tone.

The actual "moment," if there is one at all, since it only becomes actual retroactively, is a blankness. This is rendered in Wordsworth's poem by the subtle use of blank space and lineation. "But" would have differentiated things more than "And"—which is why Wordsworth does not use it (16). Ambient poetics has a mournful quality even when its explicit topic is not mourning (in fact, "There was a Boy" is a work of mourning). I am saying "mournful" here, but I am not distinguishing, as Freud did, between mourning and melancholia, which boils down to a distinction between proper and improper digestion. In some sense, "proper" mourning would always be too late. Having fully digested the lost object, we could never taste it again. As a section in Chapter 3 will suggest, melancholy is more apt, even more ethically appropriate, to an ecological situation in which the worst has already happened, and in which we find ourselves, like Wordsworth's narrator, or a character in noir fiction, already fully implicated. In Galenic medicine, melancholy was the humor that was closest to the earth.

The moment of contact is always in the past. In this sense we never actually have it or inhabit it. We posit it afterward. An echo can only reach our ears after the sound has caused the medium to vibrate. According to the theory of relativity, all perceptual phenomena exist in the past, reaching our senses at a later date—even light, even gravity, which Newton thought was instantaneous. So the uncanny, future-anterior, retroactive—and, moreover, melancholic—qualities of ambient poetics are, ironically, accurate. They track the inevitable too-lateness of

the way in which things arise. This point becomes very important when we assess why environmental writing is at such pains to convey a sense of immediacy. The immediacy is what "Romantic ecology" wants to hear in the echoes of the owls across the lake. In an astonishing bait and switch, Wordsworth withdraws this immediacy even as he appears to offer it.

The sublimity of sheer tone turns out to be dangerous for ecomimesis. Kant explicitly forbids the sublime to refer to anything "teleological." Thus a text cannot celebrate the environmental capacity of the environment and remain sublime, no matter how much the author piles phrase on phrase. Kant puts it this way:

> When we judge the sight of the ocean we must not do so on the basis of how we think it, enriched with all sorts of knowledge which we possess (but which is not contained in the direct intuition), e.g., as a vast realm of aquatic creatures, or as the great reservoir supplying the water for the vapors that impregnate the air with clouds for the benefit of the land, or again as an element that, while separating continents from one another, yet makes possible the greatest communication among them; for all such judgments will be teleological. Instead we must be able to view the ocean as poets do, merely in terms of what manifests itself to the eye—e.g., if we observe it while it is calm, as a clear mirror of water bounded only by the sky; or, if it turbulent, as being like an abyss threatening to engulf everything—and yet find it sublime.[145]

This goes for any environment, real or imagined: "when we call the sight of the starry sky sublime, we must not base our judgment upon any concepts of worlds that are inhabited by rational beings." Tone comes into the orbit of the sublime, but ecomimesis deflects it, if it remains at all representational. The content of ecomimesis is thus at war with its form. Tone also threatens to collapse into sheer stimulation, what Kant calls "mere sensations of an object (gratification or pain)."[146]

Tone is either too abstract, or not abstract enough, for ecomimesis. Ambient poetics complicates and even disables the aims of ecomimesis, which tries to get around these

complications by viewing the environment "as poets do"—that is, as an aesthetic object, or even as an analogue for the aesthetic altogether. That way the ambience of the textual environment can have just the right amount of abstraction—too little and it becomes sheer sensation; too much and it turns into something teleological. But maintaining the appropriate distance is tricky.

Ecomimesis is a specific rhetoric that generates a fantasy of nature as a surrounding atmosphere, palpable but shapeless. The ambient poetics that establishes this experience interferes with attempts to set up a unified, transcendent nature that could become a symptomatic fantasy thing. Critical close reading elicits the inconsistent properties of this ambient poetics. Ambience compromises ecomimesis because the very processes that try to convey the illusion of immediacy and naturalness keep dispelling it from within. In the language of Julia Kristeva, ambience is the genotext to the phenotext of ecomimesis. Kristeva defines the genotext: "[Genotext] will include semiotic processes but also the advent of the symbolic. The former includes drives, their disposition and their division of the body, plus the ecological and social system surrounding the body, such as objects and pre-Oedipal relations with parents. The latter encompasses the emergence of object and subject, and the constitution of nuclei of meaning involving categories: semantic and categorical fields."[147] The genotext generates the phenotext, "language that serves to communicate." Surging, pulsing "quanta" (Kristeva's word) are the "underlying foundation" of language.[148] Ironically, the genotext is the environment, the matrix in which the subject is born and grows ("the ecological and social system surrounding the body" is part of it). It is this very environment that inhibits ecomimesis from firmly establishing an essential or substantial environmental nature of any kind. And, even more ironically, especially for Kristeva herself, who believed that the genotext had a revolutionary potential, one of the ways in which this happens is that the Cartesian self that floats above phenomena

keeps rearing its ugly head, ironically in those very texts that try to flatten the distinction between subjectivity an objectivity.

In sum, one of the principal complaints against establishing a vivid, solidly real nature "out there" or "over there" is that it just fails to be convincing. This lack of believability penetrates to the very core of ecomimesis, the most potent rhetorical device for establishing a sense of nature. The inherent instability of language, and of the human and nonhuman worlds, ensure that ecomimesis fails to deliver.

Let me say right here that the attempt to forge art and concepts that lie "in between" traditional ideas of inside and outside is noble, exciting, and the only reason why I can write this book at all. The problem comes when we start to think that there is something behind or beyond or above (in other words, outside!) the inside-outside distinction. Not that the distinction is real; it is entirely spurious. Thus, it is wrong to claim that there is something more real beyond inside and outside, whether that thing is a world of (sacred) nature (traditional ecological language) or machines (Deleuze and Guattari world). Yet it is equally wrong to say that there is nothing, to "believe in nothing," as it were, and to say that he or she who has the best argument is the right one—pure nihilism. There is not even nothing beyond inside and outside. Getting used to that could take a lifetime, or more.

CHAPTER TWO

Romanticism and the Environmental Subject

Even the elementary concepts of time and space have begun to vacillate. Space is killed by the railways. I feel as if the mountains and forests of all countries were advancing on Paris. Even now, I can smell the German linden trees; the North Sea's breakers are rolling against my door.

— HEINRICH HEINE

We now begin to contextualize ambience, the texture of ecomimesis. Contextualization is necessarily incomplete: there is always more where that came from. And almost any text contains weak ecomimesis. We can safely conclude that ecomimesis exists in various cultures. Consider Basho: "The frog jumps into the old pond / The sound of the water."[1] The final line of the haiku mimics-evokes the plop of the frog, the trace of the sound, the presence of an ear and a mind that hears, all contained in a "world." Our sense of the broad scope of ambience is right and proper. Any formalist definition of literary effects can be broadly applied. And if ambience were not a feature of rhetorical and artistic production in general, this study would have no basis.

Since all texts coordinate relationships between inside and outside, ambience, and in particular the function of the re-mark, its fundamental component, is an aspect of every text.

The associated distinctions (background/foreground, sound/noise, graphics/sign, smell/scent), fall into place "after" the text has established this basic relationship. We can expect to find ambient qualities in any artwork whatsoever. We need not restrict ourselves to works that are specifically ambient, and especially not that subset of works that contain ecomimesis. In a world properly attuned to the environment, we would read poems with an eye to ecology, no matter what their content.

The universality of ambient poetics is also a condition of the very long history of ideas such as milieu and ambience, as Leo Spitzer demonstrated. Spitzer painstakingly charts a long reduction of ambience from a spiritual term to a scientific and sociological notion (the Enlightenment idea of milieu), and finally, one that suggests the form of the commodity. Restaurants have ambience. Spitzer begins with the intuition that ambience tries to name "an anti-Cartesian desire to penetrate 'les sombres tunnels de 1' inexprimable.'" The Greek periechon (surrounding "air" or atmosphere) had a spiritual quality. Plato and Sextus Empiricus considered it to be an active force. The more pragmatic Aristotle still used periechon to suggest that all things had their place, their specific surroundings. The replacement of this notion with one of abstract space has developed in natural philosophy since the Renaissance. But the idea of a specific surrounding medium was even present in Descartes (the matiere subtile adopted in Newton's idea of ether). This is rather curious, if we accept the common idea expressed by Spitzer himself at the start of the essay, that ambience fills a need for something discarded in post-Cartesian thinking. It sounds a note we will hear again: we cannot ignore Descartes.[2]

Spitzer argues that the very thinkers whose ideas undermine these usages introduce them, to protect us against what they have clearly discovered—vast empty space.[3] This vastness

subverts the significant, particular, local embeddedness that ecological writing tries to bring back. Once we accept that there is an "impossible point of view" of space itself, from which all other points of view are equally (insignificant, imagining that there are (however many) unique viewpoints from within a horizon which are unequal but significant, begins to become increasingly fraught with difficulty. The global starts to pervade the local, not just socially but also philosophically.[4] Even postmodern ideas of numerous, possibly infinite, viewpoints that are incommensurable and discrete appear against this general background. The very idea that "there is no metalanguage" is posed from this "point of view." The gradual divestment of the aura of ambience is precisely why it is a good term to use in searching out the inconsistencies of ecomimesis.

None of this gets rid of the need to trace precise historical determinations and emphases, genealogies, and lineages. Ideological determination depends not just upon the content and form of an artwork or rhetorical device, but also upon the subject position that it establishes. The artwork hails us, establishing a certain range of attitudes. When we consider the relationships of subjectivity to ambient poetics, we will discover consistent veins of historical and ideological patterning. Ironically, the thought of something "in between" beings becomes hard to think, at exactly the moment at which "the environment" rears its ugly, irradiated, toxic head. I am thus not confident that we can invent a "new and improved" way of talking about the local, or embeddedness, even if we resort to flashy new words like "network" or "web." Rather than nature, it is the subject with which this chapter concludes.

This chapter contains three different kinds of historical account, which in turn read the form, content, and subject positions of contemporary society. Marx delineates the social and economic form. Next comes a history of ideas, in which I explore the terms world, state, system, field, and body. I then

investigate the idea of a certain subject, emerging in the Romantic period: the beautiful soul. A historical perspective can induce a certain feeling of distance, even smugness. That is why this book has a third chapter, which explores future possibilities. Chapter 2 does not just provide a historical background for the speculations of the following one. It delves further into what nature might be. We will revisit the "encounter with nonidentity" spoken of previously. Ecology without Nature gradually amplifies this encounter. It appeared in Chapter 1 as the way in which environmental writing establishes corners and edges that make it hard to maintain a solid center. Ambience is what environmental writing is after, and ambience is its ultimate nemesis. These distortions reappear here in more conscious form, as "strangers"—human others, animals, and other beings who wander into and out of the world, constituting it as its boundaries, but also undermining its coherence. In Chapter 3 these strangers will take an even stranger form, as ghosts and machines. Nature cannot remain itself—it is the flickering shapes on the edges of our perception, the strangers who disturb us with their proximity, the machines whose monstrosity inspires revulsion.

We begin with a Hegelian observation that causality, at least in the humanities, works backward. The Renaissance was posited retroactively. We cannot trace its history back to a single origin and then run the story forward. This is even true of those historical moments that name themselves, such as Romanticism and postmodernism. Contemporary art, which makes much of space and environment, retroactively reconfigures all previous art, revealing its ambient qualities. The universality of ambience is itself historical, a retroactive effect of our particular moment. All art can now be assessed for its environmental qualities, and in general, for ambient poetic effects. Consider Caliban's praise of the island in The Tempest:

> The isle is full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs, that give delight, and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears; and

sometime voices. (III.2.130—133)[5]

Caliban is describing the magic of the island as the presence of Aeolian voices. Prospero the magician himself employs the disembodied Ariel, a spirit of the elements, to produce acousmatic music that "creeps by" Ferdinand "on the waters" (1.2.391), singing a song of how the matter of Ferdinand's dead father is transformed by the medium of the ocean "Into something rich and strange," complete with an echoing chorus of ringing bells and barking dogs: "Ding dong bell," "Bow-wow" (382-384,386,401,403-404).

Still, one cannot dodge the question of origin. Stating that the causality is retroactive from the moment at which environmental qualities become artistic material only pushes the problem back a stage further. How do we account for what we mean by "contemporary"? When did the contemporary emerge in this respect? I date its emergence to the rise of commercial capitalism, and to the rise of consumer society. In particular, the moment at which society began to become reflexive about consumption—when it began properly to recognize that it was a consumer society—was decisive. As I have argued elsewhere, the birth of consumerism coincided with (and to some extent was) the Romantic period.[6] Different European and American societies have had their Romantic moment at different times. But this is of little consequence, since we are talking about socially significant moments rather than mechanical, objectified time.

There are legacies of Romanticism in current environmental movements. The trouble is not that these legacies are obscure; rather, there are too many connections. The relationships are overdetermined—a sure sign that we are in the warped space of ideology. The Romantic term culture, hovering somewhere between nature and nurture, evokes a surrounding world. Furthermore, this "fact" has been imbued with "value"—culture

was good, and good for you. "Culture," like "nature" (the terms are intimately related), resembles what Gandhi said of Western civilization: "I think it would be an excellent idea." T. S. Eliot's and Raymond Williams's idea of "culture" as "a whole way of life," while supposedly descriptive rather than normative, has a Utopian ring, in a world that is not hale and hearty.[7] Ecology has inherited the languages of '"'wholeness" and "life."

Moreover, history itself has taken on ambient qualities, and there is a history to be told of how it has done so. Science, politics, ethics, and aesthetics are coming under the sign of the environment. Even postmodernism, held in suspicion by much ecocriticism, might eventually appear as a moment in the process of including the environment in thinking, doing, and making. People may eventually recognize in the Romantic period the beginning of "environmental" ways of understanding and acting. Romantic history emerged, evoking the spirit of the age, the Zeitgeist, the flavor of a culture at a particular moment in time. The phenomenological approach to history has had a long run, and has recently developed forms of auditory history and cultural studies that seek to imagine what the "soundscape" of a particular period might have been: ambient history. Phenomenology is a philosophical movement that emerges in Hegel and continues through philosophers of history such as Dilthey, Collingwood, and later incarnations in the twentieth century (Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty, even Der-rida).[8] The turn to phenomenology—literally, the science of phenomena—attempts to insert the conscious, feeling subject into a world with which it interacts.

Just as history (as a sequence of events) has been becoming more global since the early modern period and the rise of capitalism, so history (as writing) has tuned in to the idea of world: of a surrounding environment or culture; what German thinking calls Lebenswelt or Umwelt. Anthropology, newly arisen in the Romantic period, with its synchronistic style of

looking at a particular culture without considering historical change, valued societies that appeared static rather than dynamic, prehistoric rather than historical. Such "primitive" societies belonged to a "lost world" where writing, and therefore history (Greek historia, which means both historical events and their inscription) was unknown.[9]

The Continual Whirr of Machines: World Literature, World History, World Philosophy

In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels state that under the current economic conditions, "National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature."[10] If this idea is to mean more than people from several countries writing the same thing in the same ways, it must include the idea that writing in general can, under certain circumstances, meditate upon the idea of world as such. This capacity to imagine a world is not unconnected to the globalization of specific kinds of misery. It eventually becomes possible to sing a song called "We Are the World," and wince about it, or to see the many levels of painful irony within the phrase "United Nations."

Ecology has reminded us that in fact we are the world, if only in the negative. In material historical terms, environmental phenomena participate in dialectical interplay insofar as they bring an awareness of environmental negatives such as global warming, the Asian "brown cloud," and toxic events such as Chernobyl. Such phenomena were already visible in the Romantic period in the form of global epidemics such as yellow fever. Alan Bewell's penetrating ecocritical study Romanticism and Colonial Disease shows how such forms inspired writers to make ethical, political, and aesthetic accounts of "miasma," a biological word that had regained the ethical charge given it in classical Greece.[11] Far from needing filling out with some

positive "thing" such as "nature" or the ecofeminist/Lovelockian image of Gaia, this negative awareness is just what we need.

Environmental Romanticism argues that globalization has undermined any coherent sense of place. At least, that is an argument within Romantic and ecocritical thinking. Such thinking aims to conserve a piece of the world or subjectivity from the ravages of industrial capitalism and its ideologies. Place, and in particular the local, have become key terms in Romantic ecocriticism's rage, as impotent as it is loud—rhetorical affect is in direct proportion to marginalization. Moreover, this impotent rage is itself an ironic barrier to the kind of genuine (sense of) interrelationship between beings desired, posited, and predicted by ecological thinking. Place and the local, let alone nation, entail subject positions—places from which Romantic ideas of place make sense. For this reason, it is all the more important to consider deeply the idea of place, and in general the Romantic attitude to nature prevalent today.

The fact that metabolic processes create dynamic conditions that change both organism and environment means that nothing in ecosystems remains the same. Materialism puts paid to "nature," itself an early materialist term. Ulrich Beck has observed that the logic of unintended consequences plays out in industrial society such that, despite class differences, risk becomes increasingly democratic. Radiation is ignorant of national boundaries. In a bitter irony, the equality dreamt of in the 1790s has come to pass—we are all (almost) equally at risk from the environment itself. Nationality and class affiliations aside, we share the toxic legacy of Chernobyl. And no matter where in the world capitalism puts its industry, giving rise to the recent illusion of a "post-industrial" landscape, all societies are affected. No wonder ambient poetics has arisen to point out Utopias and dystopias that lie just beyond our reckoning. While nature writing claims to break down subject-object dualism in the name of a brighter day, "highly developed nuclear and

chemical productive forces" do just the same thing. They "abolish the foundations and categories according to which we have thought and acted to this point, such as space and time, work and leisure time, factory and nation-state, and even the borders between continents." Ironically, this is happening at a moment when sciences of "nature without people" make it difficult to imagine how we might address this abolition.[12]

"Modernization" itself, observes Beck, "is becoming reflexive; it is becoming its own theme."[13] The Frankfurt School had already given voice to this. Ernst Bloch asserted that "where technology has achieved an apparent victory over the limits of nature . . . the coefficient of known, and, more significantly, unknown danger has increased proportionately."[14] One name for this is postmodernism, but another name is ecology. The melancholy truth of high postmodernism is that all its talk of "space," all the environmental multimedia installations, are just the same as the lowbrow eco-schmalz that high environmental art wants to eschew (the art of place rather than space). They are identical because, under current economic conditions, not only is there no place, but there is also no space. Contemporary capitalism seeks to "annihilate space by time"—and then to collapse time itself.[15] When we consider it thus, the postmodern insistence on space is a high-cultural denial, a mystification rather than a theoretical breakthrough, flat-out contradicting objective conditions rather than expressing them.

Henri Lefebvre pioneered the idea that capitalism produced certain kinds of space and spatiotemporal relations.[16] Capitalism does not simply construct ideas about space; it creates actually existing, concrete spaces. In the category of spaces unique to capitalism, Rem Koolhaas's "junkspace" is distinctive.[17] Space itself becomes one of the things that capitalism discards in its furious progress, forever revolutionizing itself. Thus, "Junkspace is best enjoyed in a state of postrevolutionary gawking."[18] So we are not just

dealing with the kinds of supermodern "non-place" analyzed by Marc Auge, who calls them "immense parentheses."[19] (Note the similarity to De Quincey's trope of parenthesis, which the previous chapter noted as a figure of ambience.) Concrete parenthesis is not just a case of vast airports, but also of abandoned airports. Marx describes how capitalism affects not only people, but also tools and buildings:

> Tools, machines, factory buildings and containers are only of use in the labour process as long as they keep their original shape, and are ready
>
> each morning to enter into it in the same form. And just as during their lifetime, that is to say during the labour process, they retain their shape independently of the product, so too after their death. The mortal remains of machines, tools, workshops etc., always continue to lead an existence distinct from that of the product they helped to turn out. . . . The instrument suffers the same fate as the man.[20]

"Empty" space—space that capitalism has left relatively undeveloped—is intrinsic to capitalism, since the laws of capital may dictate that a vacant lot is more profitable over a certain span of time than one that has been developed. Plot is a potential space, a limbo waiting to generate value. Capitalism moves onto this empty stage, with its phantasmagoric carnival, leaving junkspace in its wake. Consider the idea of a ghost town. The leavings of capitalism have a haunting quality, if there is not enough political will, or hard money, to relate to them.[21] But even when things get fixed up nicely, a certain erasure and silence is evident, a heaviness like Levinas's there is, or a Raymond Chan-dleresque sense of atmosphere as clue. Yves Klein's International Klein Blue, hanging in galleries around the world as slabs of pigment made of precious stone suspended in a commercial medium on canvas, is a perfect metaphor for, and not so metaphorical embodiment of, the Utopian face of abstract value, a space that "bathes" us in potential paradise.[22] Before and after the work of capital, there persists a curious silence and absence marked by traces of misery and oppression.

As Marx puts it, in a pithy sentence that accounts for pastoral poetry and even nature writing and ecocriticism: "First the labourers are driven from the land, and then the sheep arrive."[23] Capitalism modernizes agricultural space. The way the land appears unoccupied is not a relic of an ancient prehistoric past, but a function of modernity: "The last great process of expropriation of the agricultural population from the soil is, finally the so-called 'clearing of estates', i.e. the sweeping of human beings off them."[24] Works such as Oliver Goldsmith's "The Deserted Village" mark this process. The earth, air, and waters are so much potential space, as frontiers of progress; in the wake of progress, they are so much junkspace. Koolhaas: "Air, water, wood: All are enhanced to produce … a parallel Walden, a new rainforest. Landscape has become Junkspace, foliage as spoilage: Trees are tortured, lawns cover human manipulations like thick pelts . . . sprinklers water according to mathematical timetables."[25]

Capitalist thinking, and capitalist machinery, actively "disappear" the workers who operate it. From the commoditized atmosphere in a restaurant to the more general sense of "aroundness," ambience is a symptom of automation. More and more processes of production are performed directly by machines. The human being is progressively sidelined, as anyone who has operated a photocopier will affirm. Humans "man" the machines: more than ever, human beingness is now revealed as a product of mechanical processes.[26] The section title comes from Deleuze and Guattari's perverse ecomimetic hymn to machines:

> While taking a stroll outdoors, on the other hand, he is in the mountains, amid falling snowflakes, with other gods or without any gods at all, without a family, without a father or mother, with nature. "What does my father want? Can he offer me more than that? Impossible. Leave me in peace." Everything is a machine. Celestial machines, the stars or rainbows in the sky, alpine machines—all of them connected to those of his body. The continual whirr of machines.[27]

Automation affected art. Repetition builds itself into the process of artistic production, both externally, as mechanical reproduction (and consumption) generates thousands of iterated copies, and work processes are stereotyped; and internally, as repetitive forms begin to become the content of art, as in minimalist music. The DJ performs a role not unlike a worker on a production line. An incomplete object passes into the DJ's hand, a recording of beats and chords, evoking a sonic state of suspension without resolution. The recordings are often produced and packaged anonymously. The DJ "mixes" this object with another object, the record currently playing in the club, and puts the previous record back in his or her crate. Although some DJs have created superstar cults, the notion of the disco or house DJ is that of an anonymous worker in a "sound factory," generating libidinal pulses in a space of dancing, producing ambience, in the same way as fairgrounds provide machines for enjoyment rather than work.[28] Work your body. In a further extension of automation, dance music specifically designated as ambient, becomes a weekend within the weekend, a space of leisure within the larger leisure space of the rave. The use of machines in music generated new forms of subjectivity that do not rely upon an illusion of depth, but nevertheless evoke the tenderness of the human being: for instance the tremblings and stutterings of an Elvis at the microphone.[29] Ambience is a symptom of capitalist alienation—not just the existential feel of capitalist society, though that certainly comes into it, as environmental writing shows, with its struggle against what it sees as the spiritual depletion of modernity. Marx described how capitalist alienation is fundamentally how human labor power and labor time get factored out of the process of value generation, even though they are intrinsic to it. Capitalism encrypts labor. Capitalist ideology "knows very well" that labor produces value. This is an open secret, as Adam Smith and Ricardo plainly demonstrate. But the objective system by which capitalism bestows a value on its products acts as if this were not the case.[30] It is ironic that a clothing store that operates using sweatshop labor from

other countries is called Gap. In this model of globalization, labor is what gets "outsourced" and vanishes almost without trace. Marx shows how capitalism performs this operation on a much deeper level, in every monetary transaction, an operation elegantly evoked by the word gap.

Labor is on the "inside" of capital, and it even appears that way on the "outside," in the commodity form. But there is an invisible gap between inside and outside. The commodity form has a skeleton in its closet, a skeleton that the detective fiction of Capital uncovers through painstaking work. Commodities behave as if they sprang from nowhere, from some wheel of fortune in outer space. Capitalist poetics in the commercial eighteenth century imagines commodities flowing spontaneously toward the consumer, if not from outer space, then from the old-school version—the Spice Islands.

There are at least two ways of looking at ideology. The first is that it is a set of conditions that rule our subjectivity—a set of beliefs, or more strongly, a series of unconscious, "hardwired" fantasies. The other way is as part of objective social conditions. Ideology resides "out there" rather than "in here," which is one reason why it is so difficult to get a mental grasp on it—it does not belong to the realm of the mind. Ideology resides in the "mouthfeel" of a McDonald's hamburger; the way men hold open doors for women; and so on. It doesn't matter whether we believe in these forms and practices very much. Indeed, they maintain an even stronger grip when we have a postmodern, cynical or ironic attitude toward them. This is certainly the case with the disappearing process that capitalism carries out on labor. This idea of ideology as externalized was what Marx was after in his theory of capital.

Something has been hidden in full view. This is the force of Amiri Baraka's "Something in the Way of Things," a paranoiac, surrealist glimpse of something that cannot quite be seen,

something found along the way that also gets in the way, playing on the two senses of "in the way."[31] The disappearing of the worker is active. The worker's body is imagined as a system of movements without a subject: "[the blacksmith] can strike so many blows per day, walk so many steps, breathe so many breaths, produce so much work, and live an average, say, of fifty years; he is made to strike so many more blows, to walk so many more steps, to breathe so many more breaths per day, and to increase altogether a fourth of his life."[32] Engels notes that to the untrained eye, the streets of an industrial town appear curiously empty: "the members of the money aristocracy can take the shortest road through the middle of all the labouring districts to their places of business, without ever seeing that they are in the midst of the grimy misery that lurks to the right and the left."[33]

Although ambience is strictly untenable as a concept, it is valid and pervasive as a social form. Ideology shapes the actual physical world. The Lake District, a British national park, would not have existed if it had not been for Wordsworthian Romanticism and such seminal texts as Wordsworth's Guide to the Lakes,[34] Frederick Law Olmsted, one of those responsible for establishing the national park system in the United States, constructed places such as Central Park in New York City. But to get to grips with the disappearing worker, think only of the common lawn—so much ecocriticism does not, because its gaze is fixed on higher, steeper, more distant things.

The suburban garden lawn's flat, almost opaque surface—so like high abstract expressionism—obscures in plain view the work that goes into it.[3-5] Just like the lawn, but for a more limited audience, abstract expressionism turned the dissolution of lyrical distance into a profitable enterprise.[36] The lawn expresses the disappearing of the worker that resulted in picturesque landscape, the production of distance, of simulated fusions of tameness and wildness, and fascinating points of

view.[37] In the early modern period lawns were used for sport, as relief from smoke and other people, and as power on display. Modern American lawns emerged in the Romantic period.[38] Their lack of fences distinguished them from English ones. Thomas Jefferson's design for Monticello was for a seamless "vista flowing from the mansion through the lawned garden fringed by trees to the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains."[39] In a fitting minimalism, the Jeffersonian precinct of the University of Virginia, from which Monticello itself is visible thirty miles away, is simply called "The Lawn." Monticello was a republican refuge from political vicissitudes, the martial struggle of public life. The green floor cloth in the entrance simply elided the outside lawn and the indoor carpet. The lawn creates ambience, a fantasy space that fuses inside and outside—all lawns are carpets.

Monticello's open lawn, however, also hid a plantation full of slaves, and was designed explicitly to exclude the sight of slaves from the front view. Side paths prevented them from being seen in their traffic to and from the house. Monticello's Web site persists in describing activity without actors, a feature of the hiding of labor through the construction of empty space:

> During Jefferson's time, Mulberry Row would have been humming with activity, with over thirty people at work in its shops and yards. While linens boiled in the wash house and milkpans clattered in the dairy, the hammers of fourteen nailmakers rang on anvils near the roaring forge of the blacksmith. Wood chips and shavings were scattered by the axes and planes of the carpenters and joiners, and two sawyers worked a pit saw slowly through a cherry log. Mule-drawn carts rattled up and down this plantation "street" bringing barrels of water, firewood for the kitchens, and charcoal for the forges. As daylight faded, the shops grew silent and the dwellings on Mulberry Row were animated by the return of Monticello's workers, both black and white.[40]

Work just "happens" in a middle voice, as if part of a background. The eventual appearance of labor and race requires a dimensional disorientation from Monticello to Mulberry Row. For Thorstein Veblen lawns must not appear

like a working farm: "The vulgar suggestion of thrift, which is nearly inseparable from the cow, is a standing objection to the decorative use of this animal."[41] The lawnmower relieved the need for the "indecorous" presence of animal labor.[42] Distortion (anamorphosis) is a consistent feature of lawn representation. The chapter of Rachel Carson's Silent Spring that deals most directly with lawns is entitled "And No Birds Sing": an allusion to John Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci."[43] In Keats's fine instance of Romantic noir an idealized femme fatale appears to her hapless courtly lover as a "sidelong" distortion. The opening and closing refrains depict the lover's depression in a bleak terra nullius in which "no birds sing" (4), an environment drained of psychic significance. Carson implies that the toxic quick fix will lead to a literal drainage of the environment.

Groups of workers on the same project do not need to inhabit the same space, let alone a place invested with subjective warmth: "Only a few parts of the watch pass through several hands; and all these membra disjecta come together for the first time in the hand that binds them into one mechanical whole. This external relation between the finished product and its various and diverse elements makes it a matter of chance . . . whether the specialized workers are brought together in one workshop or not."[44] Marx views machines and automation as absolutely alienating:

> "If," dreamed Aristotle, the greatest thinker of antiquity, "if every tool, when summoned, or even by intelligent anticipation, could do the work that befits it, just as the creations of Deadalus moved of themselves, or the tripods of Hephaestus went of their own accord to their sacred work, if the weavers' shuttles were to weave of themselves, then there would be no need either of apprentices for the master craftsmen, or of slaves for the lords." And Antipater, a Greek poet of the time of Cicero, hailed the water-wheel for grinding corn, that most basic form of all productive machinery, as the liberator of female slaves and the restorer of the golden age. Oh those heathens! They understood nothing of political economy and Christianity . . . They did not, for example, comprehend that machinery is the surest means of lengthening the working day.[45]

Humans become "an appendage of flesh on a machine of iron."[46] In the production process, as in the commodity form, humans are essential but also cast aside, literally squeezed into the tiniest possible space: "Dr. Letheby, Consulting Physician of the Board of Health, declared: 'The minimum of air for each adult ought to be in a sleeping room 300, and in a dwelling room 500 cubic feet.'"[47] The use of numbers is chilling. This is an age of sheer quantity—"facts," as Dickens's Hard Times unforgettably puts it.[48] It is ripe, therefore, for ambient poetics, whose exploitation of tone is a matter of quantity rather than quality, and absence rather than presence, generating the aesthetic equivalent of junkspace.

The immiseration of the worker is in parallel with ecological devastation, as Marx observes:

> All progress in capitalist agriculture is a progress in the art, not only of robbing the worker, but of robbing the soil; all progress in increasing the fertility of the soil for a given time is a progress towards ruining the more long-lasting sources of that fertility. The more a country proceeds from large-scale industry as the background of its development, as in the case of the United States, the more rapid is this process of destruction. Capitalist production, therefore, only develops the techniques and the degree of combination of the social process of production by simultaneously undermining the original sources of all wealth—the soil and the worker.[49]

Ecological criticism, especially the spiritual kind, castigates capitalism and industrialism for being materialistic. But capitalism holds no respect for matter, despite the ruthless demystification it imposes on the world. In truth it looks much more like an idealism gone mad. Nevertheless, it is the society of pure space, of "disappearing" the worker, and encrypting labor, rather than some feudal or earlier idyll, that enables genuine cooperation, as we shall explore in the next chapter.

Being Environmental

In such an age, subjectivity and the environment, both marginalized and exploited, frequently find themselves brought

together in conceptions of other possible worlds. There are several reasons for dating the rise of environmental art to capitalism and consumerism. They are encoded into the language and ideology of ecomimesis, and of ecocriticism in general. When we widen our view, there emerge continuities in the discourses of ecology like layers of color in a slice of rock. Romantic artistic and philosophical practices and theories are preserved within contemporary ecological languages and beliefs. The primary instances are views of the critical aspect of art. This oppositional quality can take many forms. It can be avant-garde, attacking society and aesthetic norms head on. It can be salvational, promising a quasi-religious transcendence or escape from social and aesthetic dilemmas and sufferings. Whatever form it takes, art since Romanticism comes with an explicit or implicit manifesto attached to it. Art has an edge not fully absorbed into the social matrix. It stands awkwardly outside it, either trying to supplement it with something lacking in society, or trying to suggest another way of being.

A common view is that Romantic culture rejected the fantasy of capitalist enjoyment. Romanticist ecocriticism, for example, assumes that it is recapitulating the resistance of Romantic poetry to the technologies of capitalism. But the reverse was the case. What if we widened the lens to encompass an expanded view that did not take the oikos of ecology in the sense of home or dwelling as its center? In the Romantic period, capitalism moved from its colonialist to its imperialist phase. Intense war, plunder, and slavery spread over the earth. Monocultures appeared: unfeasible ecosystems where business produces only one crop.[50] Ireland was the test case, its potatoes transplanted from South America. In the resulting Potato Famine, countless people died or emigrated to America. Language blanketed places from Kingston, Jamaica, to Calicut, India, as "spice islands," "the Indies." This alone indicates how Europe was thinking. English, Portuguese, and French psychic and political maps of the world included open, empty places (empty of society or Western social norms), soaked with desire,

producing goods spontaneously. Poetry caught wind of the coordination of imperialism and ecological destruction.

Nevertheless, you did not have to oppose capitalism to have environmental awareness. Global commerce itself gave rise to poetry that celebrated the global. We think of globalization as new, but it is only the most recent form of social processes that existed in the Romantic period. Powerfully depicted in Coleridge's Ancient Mariner, empty wilderness spaces owe something to imperial geography and the "because it's there" attitude of Everest climbers: imperialism in the abstract, the attempt to grasp the pure space, the intangible spaciousness of the environment.[51] David Simpson has argued that the empty, Antarctic wilderness toward which the Mariner voyages is an aesthetic (Romantic) version of the imperialist conquest and objectification of the world.[52] In our time this objectification has reached the limit of life-forms themselves. Rainforests are ransacked for biotechnology, and the insides of life-forms provide new products such as patented genomes in what ecofeminist Vandana Shiva describes as another wave of colonization.[53] In the language of the exhilarating rush to the new genetic frontier it is not hard to detect the strains of the Romantic voyage. Bill Clinton compared the first coding of the human genome with the travels of Lewis and Clark across the frontiers of America.[54]

The very form of alienation, the commodity, gave the first inklings of global environmental awareness in a poetic mode I have elsewhere described as "the poetics of spice." In this early form of advertising language, global flows of trade are represented as flows of spicy odor toward the nose of the consumer, in a form of elcphrasis (vivid description) that is very often deeply ambient. Ambience has become a way of describing value, the kind of thing you pay an interior designer a lot of money to achieve. Good restaurants have it—often without a qualifying adjective, just as they can have "class."

The poetics of spice creates an embodied space, not nothingness, not caught up in the logic of negative and positive. This embodied space resembles what is meant by "environment" or "ecosystem." The naturalized ecopoetics of Romantic-period writers, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, Charlotte Smith (especially in Beachy Head), and Landon, ironically creates spaces similar to those perfumed by a cloud of incense in a church or temple. It is an atmosphere, a realm in which events have room to happen, a thick, embodied, heightened atmosphere, neither full nor empty. There is a sense of potential: something is "about" to happen, but there is no label or concept for this yet. Presence and absence, past and future events, discursive thoughts and memory traces, are contained within this space. This "thick" space is strictly impossible, but it is a compelling fantasy.

Private property aided ecological awareness, however strange that may sound. In eighteenth-century Britain, Enclosure privatized land held in common, obliterating feudal and communal relationships with the earth. Some ecological movements have since been trying to get it back, materially and symbolically. In returning to Romanticism, ecocriticism highlights the yearning for a bygone life of feudal hierarchy. Primitivist environmentalisms crave a lost golden age of interconnect-edness with the environment. They look to pre-feudal, sometimes prehistoric, pasts to discover forms of primitive communism. In contrast, futurist environmentalisms are based on the notion that the golden age has not yet happened. They acknowledge that despite the medievalist glamour, most people never had much of a relationship with their land under a feudal hierarchy. These environmentalisms are also distinctively Romantic, in the tradition of William Blake and the Shelleys.

Capitalism compressed time and space. In culture, space became potent, while place, and the sense of place, became potent in its absence. That place has become endangered, like

a species on the edge of extinction, is what Heidegger means when he talks about the way in which modern culture knows nothing about nearness, despite the preponderance of cell phones and the Internet.[55] Conversely, alternative forms of place and space appeared. In environmental and other forms of "militant particularism," such as the Zapatista movement in Mexico, the ideology of place has become more trenchant, while **Utopian** forms of space are generated alongside capitalist space, such as the "thick space" of ambient poetics. Let us investigate the ways in which the culture and philosophy that derived from Romanticism deal with the realities of capitalism, industry, and science. We will concentrate on the ideas of world, state, system, field, and body, and in particular, ideas of organi-cism and holism. As these ideas are caught up in notions of the aesthetic, the aesthetic will become our focus.

World

Geography has recently provided ways of talking about interactions between space and place in a materialist, no-nonsense way. Franco Moretti has proposed that in order to study "world literature" properly, we need a more scientific, quantitative way of reading, "distant reading" (it is not clear why we cannot also search for signs of the global in the small print). Moretti applies this technique in mapping the ways in which a very significant novel, Our Village by Mary Russell Mitford, distributes places and space.[56] He could also have analyzed time. Our Village is a vivid example of late-Romantic ambience, a narrative of stasis and suspension in which cyclic techniques render the rhythms of an English village measured against the abstract time of urbanization and factories. Reading Our Village recovers a sense of Gemeinscbaft, of rich, satisfying human interactions in a world of significance. On the other hand, this sense of world emerges against the background of mechanical, industrial Gesellscbaft, and partakes of it, since the novel was serialized and mechanically

reproduced. Participating in the tirpe of the novel meant waiting for the next installment, and this is a textual village that provides an aesthetic, distanced intimacy. During the Napoleonic Wars, before the village novels of the nineteenth century appeared, the Ordnance Survey had mapped Britain according to rigorous principles. Localism was already a construction in relation to a more general view.

Our Village tries to encapsulate the feel of a social milieu. Likewise, phenomenological history endeavors to render the experience of the past. There is something ecological in the history of "soundscapes," a symptom of a wish to recover a vivid sense of place—what did England sound like in Shakespeare's age?[57] Perhaps because it is more physically involving than vision (sound waves vibrate air, which vibrates the body), sonic history tries for a more vivid rendering of place than traditional history. Auditory history has sometimes joined with actual place-based environmental politics, for example, in the American West, where campaigns to ban military aircraft and snowmobiles from the national parks' land and air is aided by accounts of what the Rockies sounded like a century ago before the internal combustion engine.

Sonic history is actually the symptom of a radical loss of place —if we had such a thing at all. It aestheticizes place, as the suffix "scape" warns us. A landscape is a painting. A soundscape has been framed. It implies a distance. There is a sonic equivalent of a frame or a pane of glass separating the historians from the time they are evoking. The re-mark is in play, differentiating between what is inside and what is outside the soundscape, and between what counts as "sound" and what counts as "noise." It would be less seductive, after all, to call the sound world a "noise-scape." After the fact, the clip clopping of horses becomes charged with significances that it did not have at the time—even if it did, such significances would already be caught in the paradoxes of the echo.

"Environmental" or "soundscape" recordings of the 1970s prefigured soundscape history, with records of birdsong and especially the sounds of whales. The "Save the Whale" campaign gained enormous help from such albums as Songs of the Humpback Whale and Deep Voices.[58] These recordings are medial. They draw attention to animals as inhabitants of the earth, conveying a sense of the environment in general: animals become part of the weather. Because we cannot understand what the animals are saying, even whether they are saying anything at all, we become aware of the communication medium. The opacity is the environmental quality. As soon as we can figure out what the whales are singing, their messages will be in the foreground rather than in the background. Ambient poetics is about making the imperceptible perceptible, while retaining the form of its imperceptibility—to make the invisible visible, the inaudible audible. On one of the tracks of Deep Voices, a blue whale is sped up to within the range of human hearing. We cannot understand it, but we can hear it.

This brings to mind the found object, the action painting, the free improvisation. Ambient art wants to make the unknown known, like science. But it also wishes to retain the flavor of the unknown, a certain mystifying opacity—otherwise ambient art would in fact be science. What is the difference between ambient art, say, setting up some subsonic microphones to record the sound of standing waves of air pressure over the Atlantic as they affect the atmosphere in a city room, as Felix Hess did, and sheer scientific experiment, data collection, or monitoring?[59] On the other hand, this "unknown" is already accounted for. Ambient art predicts, or sets up the parameters for, certain kinds of unknown. We cannot control the whale sounds, but we know that we will be getting whale sounds and not, say, the sounds of a flying saucer, if we dip a microphone into the ocean. In both cases—preserving the unknown as a reflex of artistry as opposed to science; "knowing" the unknown in advance, in some sense—ambient art misses the genuine

unknown, which would consist of radical nonidentity.

The idea of an aesthetic history is close to that of national identity as an embodied thing. Nationalism has always appealed to the sensory world, generating a specific national tone. Like nature, Englishness seems mysteriously more than the sum of its parts. It appears alongside monarchs, checks and balances, strawberries and bluebells, irreducible to them yet caught up in them. Organicism, that peculiarly English form of nature ideology, paints society as a nonsystemic heap of classes, beliefs, and practices, as ramshackle and spontaneous as a pile of compost. This is a rich, compelling, and finally authoritarian fantasy—there's no arguing with it. Many environmentalist values (complexity is good, the world cannot be totalized though it is a whole) are slices of Romantic organicism exemplified in Edmund Burke's reactionary prose. But environmentalism need not be organicist, not even in the Romantic period. Frankenstein shows how organicism fails. Incapable of loving his creature spontaneously, Frankenstein would benefit from a more rational and planned social structure that treated all social actors as equal participants with equal rights.

Nationalism, a quintessential^ Romantic ideology, continues to motivate environmental art seeking to re-enchant the world. The nation-state remains a real yet fantastic thing. As the idea of world (Welt) became popular in German Romantic idealism, so the nation-state was imagined as a surrounding environment.[50] The idea of the nation as "homeland," as in American Homeland Security or the German Heimat, demanded a poetic rendering as an ambient realm of swaying corn, shining seas, or stately forests. Nature appeared sublime, "there" and yet fundamentally beyond representation, stretching beyond the horizon and back into the distant, even pre-human past. It was a suitable objective correlative for the je ne sais quoi of nationalist fantasy. Walter Scott's invention of historical novels, realist fictions generating an entire world in a

bubble of past-tense narrative, did as much for environmental nationalism as explicitly Romantic criticisms of modern society and technology. Can progressive art rescue the aesthetics of environmental ambience from its ideological frame? Or is the thick, embodied space of nationalist representation hopelessly saturated with ideological content?

The Shire in J. R. R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings depicts the world-bubble as an organic village. Tolkien narrates the victory of the suburbanite, the "little person," embedded in a tamed yet natural-seeming environment. Nestled into the horizon as they are in their burrows, the wider world of global politics is blissfully unavailable to them. Tolkien's work embodies a key nationalist fantasy, a sense of "world" as real, tangible yet indeterminate, evoking a metonymic chain of images—an anamorphic form. The Lord of the Rings establishes not only entire languages, histories, and mythologies, but also a surrounding world. If ever there was evidence of the persistence of Romanticism, this is it.

In Heidegger's supremely environmental philosophy, the surrounding ambience created by Tolkien's narrative is called Umwelt.[61] This is the deep ontological sense in which things are "around"—they may come in handy, but whether they do or not, we have a care for them.[62] It is a thoroughly environmental idea. Things are oriented in relation to other things: "The house has its sunny side and its shady side."[63] Others (elves, dwarves, men) care for their surroundings differently. The strangeness of Middle-earth, its permeation with others and their worlds, is summed up in the metaphor of the road, which becomes an emblem for narrative. The road comes right up to your front door. To step into it is to cross a threshold between inside and outside. There is a sense that the story, and the world it describes, could go "ever on and on" like the road in Bilbo Baggins's song.[64] But wherever we go in this world, however strange or threatening our journey, it will

always be familiar, insofar as it has all been planned in advance, mapped out, accounted for. This planning is not quite as narrowly rational as a modern factory. Still, the recent film of The Lord of the Rings, with its built-in commentaries on the special edition DVD about the craftsmanship and industrial processes that went into making it, reveals something true about the book. This Umwelt is a function of holistic, total design, total creation: Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk with a how-to booklet thrown in. The holistic world that "goes ever on and on" is exciting and involved, but in the end, it is just a gigantic version of the ready-made commodity. This is ironic, since one of the themes of the work is the resistance to industrialism and specifically to commodity fetishism, in the form of the hypnotic ring itself.

What gets lost in this elaborate attempt to craft a piece of kitsch that could assuage the ravages of industrialism? Like some nature writing and ecocriticism, Tolkien's Umwelt edits out significant aspects of Romantic literature pertaining to hesitation, irony, and ambiguity, even and especially in Wordsworth. Consider Schlegel's idea of Romantic irony. It manifests in narratives in which the narrator becomes the protagonist, unnervingly aware that the world he or she has constructed is a fiction.[65] Must ecological and ecocritical worlds be absolutely self-contained, utterly sincere—and how Romantic is that? Irony involves distancing and displacement, a moving from place to place, or even from homey place into lonely space. Early ecological science developed terms resonant with the idea of home, such as niche, a word derived from a place that houses a statue.[66] Science itself can be Tolkienesque. Where does that leave migrating birds, hominids, pilgrims, gypsies, and Jews?

The question of animals—sometimes I wonder whether it is the question—radically disrupts any idea of a single, independent, solid environment.[67] Each animal, perhaps, has its own

environment, as German scientists such as Jacob von Uexkiill wanted to establish in the early twentieth century, which profoundly influenced Heidegger.[68] Even if this is not true (if it were, it would multiply the problem of "the" environment exponentially), the idea of "our" environment becomes especially tricky when it starts to slither, swim, and lurch toward us. The beings known as animals hover at the corner of the separation of inside and outside generated by the idea of world as a self-contained system. Strangely enough, thinking in terms of "world" often excludes animals—beings who actually live there. For Edmund Husserl, animals are like deaf people, "abnormal."[69] For Heidegger, animals lack of a sense of world (Weltarm).[70] Or, more precisely, their sense of world is this lack.[71] In contrast, some ecological thinking wants to forget about the differences between humans and other animals, real or imagined, as soon as possible. This inverted speciesism celebrates "the more than human world" (Abram). For Percy Shelley, animals lose their cruelty just as humans begin to live a more pacifist existence. In his vegetarian ecotopia they end up "sport[ing] around [man's] dwelling" (The Daemon of the World, 2.444). For Rillce or Levertov, post-Romantic poets keen to establish an environmental poetics, animals have an access to the "open" that is denied to humans, either entirely or as a result of bad training.[72] It all depends how up close and personal you want to get. Levinas strove to exclude animals from his idea of contact with the "face" of the other as the basis of ethics. But he was haunted by the face of a dog who had looked at him, perhaps with kindness, in a Nazi prison camp.[73] For Tolkien, dwarves, elves, hobbits, and talking eagles are welcome others, but swarthy "southern" or "eastern" men are not.[74] Some of those who refused to evacuate New Orleans in the wake of hurricane Katrina did so because they were not allowed to take their pets and would not abandon them. This may be a matter of moral feeling rather than stubborn primitivism.

The Nazis ferociously opposed animal cruelty but thought nothing of exterminating threatening human others. Animals bring up the ways in which humans develop intolerances to strangeness and to the stranger. We must become like animals (ecocentrism), or vice versa (anthro-pocentrism). We are back with the quantum state we discovered in Chapter 1. There is no way of maintaining the strangeness of things without coming down on one side or the other. What of the arrival ("human" or "animal" or other) your worldview was not expecting? I use the word arrival in the sense Derrida means when he speaks of a "pure hospitality" as one that "opens or is in advance open to someone who is neither expected nor invited, to whomever arrives as an absolutely foreign visitor, as a new arrival, nonidentifiable and unforeseeable, in short, wholly other"; "without at least the thought of this pure and unconditional hospitality ... we would not even have the idea of the other, of the alterity of the other, that is, of someone who enters into our lives without having been invited. We would not even have the idea of love or of 'living together' (vivre ensemble) with the other in a way that is not a part of some totality or 'ensemble.' "[75] This genuinely "other other" appears to be held up at the border of the world as nestling horizon. Just as ambient poetics undermines the environmentalism that uses it to establish itself, so strangers undermine the very Umwelt that uses them to establish its boundaries. Far from healing the rift between humans and others, thinking since the Romantic period keeps opening it up in all sorts of ways. This is despite the fact that radical linguistic theory of the age posited language as deriving from animal cries.[76] Onomatopoeia is ecomimesis in miniature. Despite the recent attempt to categorize the bonobo chimpanzee as a species of Homo, a seemingly endless series of hominids and humanoids stands between humans and animals. And no one has yet categorized humans as a species of Pan paniscus.

If we knew what to do with animals and their kin, we could take a break from the painful exertions of consciousness. We

could shout "We are the world!" and it would be true. Of course, we would not be able to watch ourselves on video as we dissolved into oneness with the stranger. And so ecological writing keeps beating itself against the glass of the other, like a fly. The constant dinging of the impact—in which the strange other, as soon as it enters into proximity, becomes an inert or threatening thing—indicates a loss of irony. The only way to remain close to the strangers without killing them (turning them into yourself or into an inanimate object) is to maintain a sense of irony. If irony and movement are not part of environmentalism, strangers are in danger of disappearing, exclusion, ostracism, or worse.

Schlegel determined that irony was democratic. All truth claims are fragmentary, and the more you know, the more you realize that your own perspective is shot through with fragmentariness, negativity, and hesitation. You start to tolerate other ways of life.[77] But is toleration enough, as Derrida asked? You might end up not with a sense of the other as other, but with a sense of sheer "I," a blank space or black hole, transcending all possible positions—a state of "quiescence and feebleness—which does not like to act or to touch anything for fear of surrendering its inward harmony . . . the source of morbid saintliness and yearning."[78] This is Hegel's view of the "beautiful soul," as we shall see, and it has much to tell us about environmentalism. When it becomes a way of being, irony ironically ceases to be irony. Instead of establishing an aestheticized distance toward everything, irony must forge intimate relationships with strangers. We will be grappling with this intimacy in Chapter 3. For now, let us continue to steer ourselves through different possible forms of environmental immersion.

State

While we are on the subject of self-containment, and the irony

that punctures it, we should clarify the Romantic idea of holism. As well as being a major ecological ideology, holism constitutes the "feel" of nationalism—"we" are interconnected in a whole greater than the sum of its parts. The struggle between individualism and holism offers an attenuated choice between absolute liberty and absolute authority—in other words, the dilemma called America. Americans are caught between the constitution and a militarized state, between placards and pepper spray. There is something of this in the way in which models of nature give to organisms with one hand, while taking with another. Organisms are politically all-important, and yet they are easily sacrificed for the sake of the greater whole. The ideological supports of American capitalism have gradually shifted away from individualism toward corporatism. Holism is not as oppositional as some environmentalists claim. State terror takes an interest in ecological catastrophe. Far from writing it off with the reactionaries as "junk science," the Pentagon has published documents on the geopolitical effects of global warming.[79] Paul Virilio has even suggested that ecological catastrophe is an excellent simulation of total global war. Hurricane Katrina, which devastated New Orleans, provides a perfect example. President Bush appointed Homeland Security, an umbrella department covering military, intelligence, and counterterrorism, to oversee the cleanup operation. Popular resistance, and military might, could both be considered in ambient terms. The war theorist Clausewitz imagines the Spanish resistance to Napoleon as "something fluid and vaporous which condensed nowhere into a solid body."[80] We have seen how De Quincey's theory of consumerist reading now looks a lot like a theory of environmental poetics. His experiments with opiated prose generate an understanding of tone, a plateau of intensity. Art and philosophy have become interested in the ways in which certain states are indeed static—tonally undifferentiated and consistent. It may surprise some that Romanticism, far from supporting sheer temporality, developed a static poetics of environments suspended in time.

Wordsworth's idea of the spot of time, whose name alone suggests this suspension, is a traumatically vivid experience that punctures the regular rhythms of consciousness, a moment when something outside the habitual world breaks through. The mind is jerked out of its normal medium, like a fish out of water.

Heidegger's idea of thinking as dwelling has a static quality. Walter Benjamin's ideas of dialectics at a standstill and phantasmagoria are static. The musical perceptions of John Cage, celebrating a notion of quietness, evoke a communitarian suburban or libertarian form of quiet that is also static in a political sense—there is no chance of progress, just an endless application of laws. Quiet is a meaningful, continuous absence of noise, often with strict legal definitions.[81] Static art and static philosophy arose as the nation-state, and beyond its borders, the environment gradually "dissolved" into view. Can progressive ecological thinking rescue the ecological Thing, fantasy object of the nation-state, and always somewhat in excess of nationalism, from the place of its birth? Ecological reality, produced in part by the industrializing processes of nation-states themselves, has eclipsed national boundaries. Only an ecological language opposed to the phantasmagorical positivi-ties of nation-speak is anywhere near legitimate, and only if it does not prove to be just another "new and improved" version of the same thing.

System

It is better for environmentalism to think in terms of collectivism rather than holism. A collective does not imply an organic whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. Indeed, ecology without nature rules out holism. Is ecological collectivism entirely unknown to us yet, as Bruno Latour has suggested? Or are there models that do not suffer from the vices of holism? Perhaps the notion of system is less chewy,